

# ON THE BALL

Issue 77



Hi Everyone

Welcome to the lockdown edition of On The Ball! What a first half of the year it's been, no one could have predicted what was going to happen in the world or the situation we find ourselves in now. As we write this some of the rules are beginning to relax but it's been a hard struggle for many people, some of whom haven't seen close family or grandchildren for weeks, if not months. One of the bright shining stars has been Michael who has kept us all together every week via his radio show, despite suffering from corona virus symptoms right at the start of lockdown. Listening to his Radio 2 show every week is like receiving a big warm hug from Michael (and we know how wonderful his big hugs are!). He's not been afraid to discuss his own feelings during this time and has given a much welcome lift to so many people. It's also been wonderful to see him host The One Show fairly regularly during this period, and let's hope that continues as time goes on.

What about that wonderful version of "You'll Never Walk Alone" that Michael recorded with Captain Tom Moore to celebrate the Captain's 100th birthday? That was certainly out of the blue and for it to be a No. 1 UK chart single was beyond expectations. The money raised will certainly be helping those in need during this current situation.

As Michael says in his letter (yes of course you read his letter first!) it's hard to believe that amazing concert at the O2 in March was probably the last time any of us visited a big venue, and although we knew that something was on the horizon I don't think any of us were predicting that life would change so dramatically for so many of us.

So many charities have been suffering in the current climate and we have been pleased to raise a substantial amount of money for both Shooting Star Children's Hospices and The Royal Theatrical Fund. So many people working in the theatre industry still have no idea when they will be able to get back to doing what they love best.

We are just so grateful to have our fan family around us who never cease to surprise us with comments and messages. We purposely made our Facebook page a coronavirus-free zone which we think has helped with keeping us all positive. Stay safe everyone!

Love

Maureen and Gill

My Dearest Friends,

I hardly know where to start with this letter to you all. I'm writing it from home in the week before my birthday and like all of you wondering at and trying to make sense of the changes to our world so suddenly turned on its head.

I couldn't have guessed that the last night of the Ball/Boe tour at the O2 London would probably be my last performance in front of a live audience for the rest of this year. If life had continued as we all expected I would, at this very moment, be waiting in the wings of the Coliseum Theatre in a wig, high heels, full make up, surrounded by the most talented young cast, getting ready to sing out to a packed house that "You Can't Stop the Beat". It breaks my heart that I'm not there, seeing you all in the audience, saying hello at the stage door, listening to

your laughter, sharing special memories, doing what I love the most... but the beat will indeed go on, in every sense of the word, and those wonderful moments will return for all of us.

It is so important to try to remain as positive and optimistic as we can. We face enormous change in our lives, some of us have seen loved ones brought low and leave us because of the virus. Jobs and livelihoods have been put at risk. We've been separated from the people we love and cherish and we are always dealing with feelings of uncertainty, insecurity and frustration.

And yet..... and yet, all around us we see people rising to the challenges and meeting them head on. Coming together to try to make a positive difference in whatever way they can. Helping where it's possible to ease the way through this for people less able to cope, retaining our sense of humour, compassion and kindness so we can say to ourselves

When this is eventually all over, and of course one day very soon it will be over, that we did our bit where we could and we are all the better for it.

I won't fill this letter with news of upcoming plans, now is not the time and nothing can be guaranteed but you know I'm keeping myself busy and counting the days till we are all able to share moments together.

My Radio show and One Show stints have been a life line for me. Sharing stories and time together, all be it virtually, has been wonderful and helped to make me feel connected and useful in some way. Like all of us, there are good days and bad days but the good days are getting more frequent and the bad days are dealable with. I am very lucky and count my blessings everyday.... but I miss you all so much.

So I'll finish now by saying  
Thank You So Much for all your  
support for the things I've tried to  
do to keep people positive and smiling,  
for all the messages of love and  
support I receive every day that put  
a smile on my face and in my  
heart, and I hope and pray that  
you're staying safe, reconnecting with  
the ones you love, are able to hug  
and kiss without fear and are  
able to stay away from the fridge  
and get your hair done very soon. 😊  
My hair is hilarious and the Covid  
Stone I've put on will have to be  
addressed very soon.

God Bless you, my lovelies,  
and remember "We'll meet again" and  
"you'll never walk alone..."

I bloody love you

M. O'Garra  
X

# A Weekend In Glasgow

By Laura Mannella



I managed to make it to Glasgow for a quick weekend, with my friend Stacey Inges Childress, to see the boys' first tour performance. We literally left the States on Friday evening and arrived in Glasgow Saturday morning, before attending the Ball and Boe performance Saturday night. It was fabulous and magical, everything I hoped for and more! We had seats in the second row just right of dead center from the end of the stage extension.

I was so excited as I missed Alfie in the *Les Mis* concert in October as he was out ill. I had front row center seat for that performance and it would have been fantastic to see the boys perform together. However this show was fantastic! I think I sang along (quietly) to every song, danced at every opportunity (not my usual style) and was probably one of those annoying fans who waved my light on my iPhone at every appropriate moment! I hereby apologize to anyone behind me if I was and hope I didn't ruin the show for anyone. I truly "lived in the moment" as they say and enjoyed myself immensely!

I didn't want the show to end, I just love these boys to pieces. Their music has been such a positive light in my life over the past year. I can't thank them enough. We did a bus tour on Sunday and visited the museum which was a short walk down the road from our hotel. Sadly Monday morning we were on our way back to the States. It was a whirlwind weekend getaway but one that I will cherish for the rest of my life! I'll be back for *Hairspray*!

# BALL & BOE: BACK TOGETHER

The year started with a bang as Michael and Alfie went out on tour. They delivered their usual high quality spectacle and you can relive it via these fantastic images, which were taken by Ian Corbridge at Manchester Arena.









## Michael Supports The Scarf

By Elaine Monro

We all know what a wonderful caring guy Michael is, but he went above and beyond to support me in my Cancer Research UK charity work, in a way I could never have imagined. I was lucky enough to do a meet and greet in Glasgow with both Michael and Alfie. It was just after I launched the “Friends of Cancer Research UK Tartan” which works alongside the local Cancer Research UK in the Scottish Borders. Michael wore the scarf when we had the photo taken as you can see from the attached! I gave Michael and Alfie a scarf each and kept the one Michael wore as a memento.

Very soon it became so much more. I wore it to every event I attended and that scarf and I became inseparable. Whenever I felt a bit nervous, having that little bit of Michael with me meant I could do anything, including visiting Westminster Parliament and Holyrood Parliament.

I was lucky enough to thank Michael during the Stages Cruise and give him an up-date on the tartan’s progress. It’s no exaggeration to say between the brilliant Selkirk committee, myself and Michael we have raised over £400,000 so far and I fully intend to raise a whole lot more! It goes without saying, thanks to all the support I have had, we will beat cancer sooner.

Helen Grenville captured these shots from Michael and Alfie’s concert in Brighton.



# THE SHOW MUST GO ON

The following tour photos were captured at venues around the country from different fans. The top row were captured by Holly Barber. The bottom four on this page were taken by Claire Stockil and the three bottom right were the work of Claire Shorter and her mum Janet Delasalle.





# THE ULTIMATE FAN COMPETITION

By Jen Garner



“Kia Ora Koutou Katoa!” Hello to you all! Firstly, I want to say that I do hope everybody is keeping safe and well in these uncertain times.

As you may have guessed, I’m writing this from New Zealand. I came out here at the beginning of March to visit my family and due to the current global situation I am unable to fly back to the UK in the foreseeable future.

I’m sitting here on a bright, sunny morning thinking back on my earliest memories of following Michael and I am amazed how clear they are.... as if it were only yesterday!

I always loved ‘Michael Music’ through his performances in shows like *Aspects Of Love*, *Phantom Of The Opera* and *Les Misérables*, before being fortunate enough to see and meet Michael in person. I watched Eurovision in 1992 and vowed, at the first opportunity, to go to a Michael concert.

On Saturday, March 23rd 1993, I did just that, sat on a rickety old seat in the back stalls of the Manchester Apollo Theatre. I just longed to be up there on the stage when Michael picked someone out of the audience whilst singing ‘I Wanna Dance With Somebody’ (someone who loves me). I rushed round to the stage door afterwards and saw his twinkling blue eyes and the rest, as they say... is history!

It was sometime later on a gloriously, hot summer day, the 10th July 1995 in Bath, I watched the opening of The European Youth Olympics when Michael sang ‘Something’s Coming’, ‘Love Changes Everything’ and ‘Anthem’. On that day I had my first photo taken with him.



So much has happened since then. Michael and Alfie became good friends after... dare I mention *Kismet*! They realised their voices complemented one another amazingly well and went on to record three very successful albums, as well as appearing numerous times together both live and on television. They got two TV specials, latest being 'The Ball and Boe Christmas Show'.

In November 2019 Michael and Alfie's third album "Back Together" was released and rose swiftly in the charts, reaching Number 2 and only very narrowly being pipped to the post for the Number 1 slot.

One quiet, dark and rainy afternoon I was browsing the web and up popped Michael and Alfie, inviting their fans to enter a competition. They asked for a photo of yourself holding the 'Back Together' CD and to share the reasons why you thought you may be successful in winning. So... I pondered "Why not have a go?"

I took a selfie and people who know me will testify that I'm not the best photographer in the world! Then, I put together a few words to the effect that this must be one of the hardest decisions for them both to make, as they had so many loyal fans. My "pitch" (if you like!) was that I'd travelled thousands of miles over the years to see them in indoor and outdoor concerts, shows and musicals, throughout the length and breadth of the UK and much further afield. Therefore, I would be thrilled and proud to be considered for this award.

Imagine my surprise and delight when I had a message notifying me that I had actually won! I was over the moon and felt very honoured to say the least.

My award arrived just before the 'Back Together' tour started in Glasgow this year. It contained Michael and Alfie's three CDs 'Together' (2016), 'Together Again' (2017) and 'Back Together' (2019) all presented in a beautifully framed glass case. There is a plaque in the centre with a lovely personal message from them both... something I will treasure forever.

I haven't, as yet, had chance to find the perfect home for it but rest assured, it will always have pride of place somewhere in my home!

In this bizarre situation, I'm sure many of us will look back on the last 'Ball and Boe Back Together Tour' with fond memories. Other fans will tell you all about it but I really believe it was THE BEST EVER, it was just phenomenal! At every venue I went to, the crowd went crazy.... not just me!!

I'm sure we all take strength from listening to Michael and Alfie's music as well as liaising with our Fan Club friends on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the like in these very difficult circumstances.

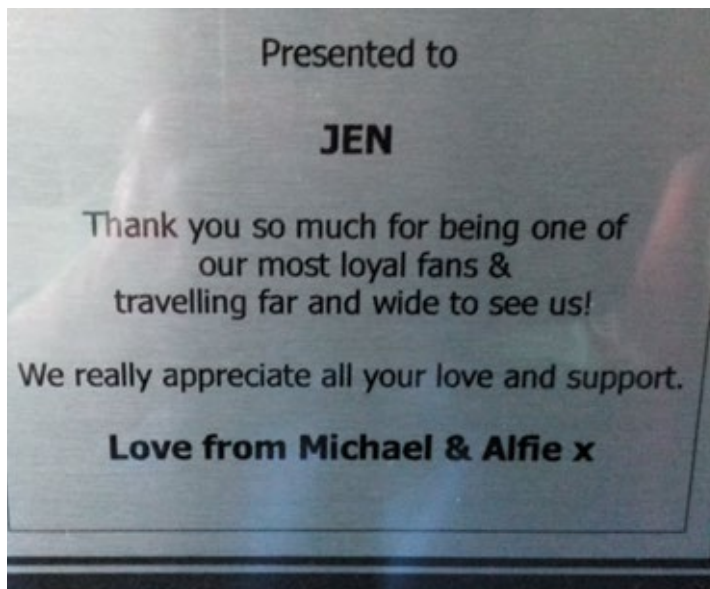
I think I speak for each and everyone of us when I say Michael and Alfie ... you've been there for us all in the good times and more importantly the not so good times. You've



raised our spirits and lifted our hearts.

As I am away from home, I obviously can't have a photo holding my award... so the best I have been able to do is take a photo of me, holding a photo of the award. Thank you Kate for doing the honours!

Huge thanks Michael and Alfie for choosing me, for your lovely message and for all the pleasure you give to us all!





# MICHAEL AND ALFIE TAKE THE O2 BY STORM!

by Mark Witchell. Live photos by Linda Wellington

Wow! What an amazing night at the O2 Arena to finish the 'Back Together' 2020 UK Arena Tour for Michael Ball and Alfie Boe. The energy in the arena was probably one of my best experiences I have ever had at a live concert. It was Michael and Alfie's second live concert at the O2 after their amazing first Arena Tour concert in 2017. However, Michael and Alfie do have a bit of history with the O2 Arena. Back in 2010 Alfie starred as Jean Valjean in the historic 25th Anniversary Staged Concert performance of *Les Misérables*. At the end of that performance Michael walked on to the O2 Arena stage to perform 'One Day More' with many of the original 1985 cast of *Les Mis*. What a night - which can be re-lived over and over again on DVD and occasionally on Sky Arts. Anyway - on to Saturday 7th March 2020.

I was lucky enough to be attending the pre-show Meet and Greet with my mum. There was a large group with it being at the O2 but Michael and Alfie were in a great mood. They were obviously nervous with all 20,000 seats sold out! They were also excited that the performance was being filmed for cinema release (on the rescheduled dates

of 12th and 13th September). After meeting some lovely people, we went for a pre-show drink in the American Express lounge before settling down for the concert.

At 8pm precisely Shaun Escoffery, who has played Mufasa from 'The Lion King' in the West End for over ten years, started a 20-minute support set which was great!

After a 20-minute interval Murray Gould and Callum McLeod led the orchestra and backing singers on to stage. The orchestra was certainly large with more backing singers than previous tours. The stage was also new with a 'T-Bone' shape pointing out into the auditorium. We were treated as always to the large computerised backdrop which supported each song brilliantly with some amazing images and illustrations. The tension filled the O2 Arena as the band struck the opening note before the backing singers started singing 'Woah Woah'. That could only mean one thing- 'The Greatest Show' from *The Greatest Showman* would be our opening number. Michael and Alfie brilliantly bounded on to the top steps and opened up to rapturous applause. They swiftly moved on to a song they had never performed live in

concert before, 'I Knew You Were Waiting'- a song made famous as a duet by Aretha Franklin and George Michael in 1987. Michael and Alfie were certainly back at the O2 and what better song to sing next than 'You'll Be Back' from *Hamilton*. Next came a string of songs from Michael and Alfie's third album 'Back Together' which was released last November. First up was 'Something's Gotten Hold Of My Heart', a number one hit for Gene Pitney and Marc Almond in Christmas 1988 and the first number one hit of 1989. Next came a beautiful version of 'Sunrise Sunset' from *Fiddler On The Roof*. After writing a song for Michael's number one solo album at the beginning of 2019, Ben Earle was back and had penned a beautiful tune for Michael and Alfie called 'Army' with the lyric extremely poignant for how the world is at the moment.

Next came a favourite from Michael and Alfie's first album 'Together'. It was of course 'A Thousand Years' from the movie *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn — Part 1*. During the current period of isolation there is no song with a more poignant lyric than 'Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again' from *The Phantom Of The Opera* which followed next.



It is always a treat to hear 'Not While I'm Around' from *Sweeney Todd* which beautifully segued into 'The Rose'.

I am so pleased Michael and Alfie have recorded and performed Labi Siffre's 'Something Inside So Strong' which Michael made into a solo hit back in 1995. Next came John Farnham's 'You're The Voice' which had everybody up dancing on their feet. This song resonates with me more at the moment after seeing John Farnham perform it earlier this year raising money for the dreadful Australian Bushfires. Even though Alfie said that he couldn't sing 'Love Changes Everything' from *Aspects Of Love* as well as Michael, the pair sang a superb duet of Michael's 1989 number two hit. Michael then left the stage before Alfie sang a beautiful version of Snow Patrol's 'Run' which saw every mobile phone torch light up the O2 Arena and create quite a beautiful sight. Michael then returned to the stage to explain that despite everything that is happening in the world at the moment there is nothing greater than being proud to stand together as British people. He went on to say that in times of crisis we always pull together as a nation. This led into a stunning version of 'Anthem' from *Chess* which resulted in the







whole O2 Arena on their feet in applause and admiration.

What followed was quite incredible! The famous notes from the barricades of *Les Misérables* struck up before Michael sang 'Stars', Alfie sang 'Bring Him Home' and the entire ensemble took to the stage to sing a rousing version of 'One Day More'. Shaun Escoffery then returned to the stage to join Michael and Alfie for 'Circle Of Life' and 'He Lives In You' from 'The Lion King' which had everybody on their feet dancing. The atmosphere was electric and I think 'He Lives In You' has now become a staple requirement in all of Michael and Alfie's concerts!

One of my absolute highlights from the new album 'Back Together' is the Queen Medley and it was amazing to hear it live in concert. 'Who Wants to Live Forever' and 'Friends Will Be Friends' were incredible but what a delight it was to hear 'The Show Must Go On' again. Michael recorded it on his 2005 album 'Music' and hasn't performed it live in concert since Hampton Court, ten years ago!

Michael and Alfie then left the stage before returning to sing Frank Sinatra's 'My Way'. Michael and Alfie explained how their whole partnership has been a dream and they had no idea of the amazing success that they were going to have since they first formed together back in 2016. The pair then left the stage again before returning to sing something new to close the concert and a total surprise – a 'Grease' Medley. Everybody was on their feet

dancing and clapping. 'Grease Is The Word', 'Grease Lightnin'' and 'You're The One That I Want' followed before 'We Go Together' aptly closed the evening's concert at 10.45pm!

We certainly got our money's worth and the whole evening really was one of the best nights at a concert I have ever experienced! We get to re-live it all again on 12th and 13th September at the cinemas and let's hope for a DVD release too! As I write this there is a lot of uncertainty in the world but we will all see each other again with one thing in common - a love of the music which Michael has provided for many, many years! Take care everybody and stay safe!



## SET LIST

**The Greatest Show**  
from 'The Greatest Showman'

**I Knew You Were Waiting**

**You'll Be Back**  
from 'Hamilton'

**Something's Gotten Hold  
Of My Heart**

**Sunrise, Sunset**  
from 'Fiddler On The Roof'

**Army**

**A Thousand Years**  
from 'The Twilight Saga'

**Wishing You Were Somehow Here  
Again** from 'Phantom Of The Opera'

**Not While I'm Around**  
from 'Sweeney Todd'

**The Rose**

**Something Inside So Strong**

**You're The Voice**

**Love Changes Everything**  
from 'Aspects Of Love'

**Run (Alfie)**

**Anthem** from 'Chess' (Michael)

**Les Mis Intro/ Stars (Michael)  
Bring Him Home (Alfie)  
One Day More**  
from 'Les Misérables'

**Circle Of Life  
He Lives In You**  
from 'The Lion King'

**Queen Medley:  
Who Wants To Live Forever  
The Show Must Go On  
Friends Will Be Friends**

**My Way**

**Grease Medley:  
Grease Is The Word  
Grease Lightnin'  
You're The One That I Want  
We Go Together**

Shaun Escoffery joined Michael and Alfie for 'Circle Of Life' and 'He Lives In You' in Nottingham, Birmingham, Cardiff, Bournemouth, Brighton and London.

Luke Evans joined Michael and Alfie in Cardiff to sing 'With Or Without You'

# Michael And Tom Hit Number One!



Hannah and said, 'Would he be interested? If we get it out by tomorrow he could be No.1 for his 100th birthday!'"

Michael contacted Decca and a track was prepared with Michael recording his vocal at home. The Voices For Care NHS choir all recorded their parts on phones and tablets. Everything was then mixed and played for the first time on Zoe Ball's radio show with the track made available for purchase, with all funds going toward Captain Tom's tally.

There was a close run race for the number one spot as The Weeknd was also doing great numbers, but even he took to Twitter to urge people to buy Tom and Michael's track, rather than his, as he wanted to see Tom honoured with a number one single.

Fortunately, that's exactly what happened. Michael earned his first number one single in his career, but was keen to point out it was all about Tom and not him. The BBC honoured the effort with a special programme called 'Captain Tom: We Salute You' and Michael went to meet him in person.

Captain Tom's efforts raised an incredible £32 million and he hit his 100th birthday with a number one single, two entries into the Guinness Book Of Records, a birthday postmark from the Royal Mail, a flypast from the RAF and a personalised message from The Queen, who has made him an honorary Colonel and awarded him a knighthood.



One of the more uplifting stories during the lockdown period was the story of Captain Tom Moore. He began walking laps of his garden, with the aim of doing 100 before his 100th birthday, hoping to raise £1,000 for NHS charities. However the story went viral and before long, he'd decimated his target by reaching an incredible £8 million!

It didn't end there though. As the donations mounted, the story received more and more publicity and the

donations kept coming. The BBC started covering the progress and celebrities, the Prime Minister and even The Queen became aware of it. Michael also had taken an interest.

"I first saw Captain Tom Moore on BBC Breakfast on Good Friday," Michael told *MusicWeek*. "I was just so inspired I asked him and his daughter, Hannah, to come on my radio show on Easter Sunday, and again on the following Sunday because they'd raised over a



million by then. We stayed in contact and I was doing my bit on social media to keep the focus going. The night before it came to his final lap of the garden, the Breakfast Show said, 'We'd love you to come on as a surprise and sing to him'.

"I sang 'You'll Never Walk Alone' and saw him joining in so I said, 'We should do this as a duet!' as a laugh. We said goodbye and straight after I literally went, 'Wait, we should do it!' To be honest I never thought it would happen, but I phoned

# PAST & PRESENT: CELEBRATING 28 YEARS OF THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB (part 1)

Originally the plan for this issue was going to be coverage of the Ball & Boe tour, followed by reports from Michael's return to the role of Edna Turnblad in *Hairspray*. Unfortunately due to the outbreak of Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown everyone has been enduring, the *Hairspray* shows were postponed. However, as the Fan Club has turned 28 years old, we thought it might be a good idea to include some stories from different fans about their Michael experiences. We had such a good response, it's going to be a two part feature. To kick us off, Julie Vilder tells her story:



More recently I've had a few photos and reviews included and I've loved seeing them in print – thanks James Gaden!

Being a Fan Club member has brought me such joy over the years, getting to hear about what Michael and fans have been up to. It's so lovely how the Fan Club has brought people together in good and difficult times.

For me personally, I've been very fortunate to go to the various concerts, shows etc and met up with some lovely fans. One such event was back in 1994, when I went to the very first Fan Club event organised by Maureen and Gill. It was a great afternoon catching up with everyone and sharing our

I first become a Michael fan back in 1989 when he appeared on Top of The Pops singing 'Love Changes Everything'. Little did I know I would still be following him 31 years later!

In 1992, I was thrilled to learn that a new Fan Club dedicated to Michael had been launched. The club was founded by Maureen Wilkinson-Rouse and Gill Oakley who were both fans of Michael themselves. I still remember, to this day, the excitement of joining the Fan Club and I knew the club was going to be something special. The opportunity to keep up to date with Michael's activities like TV appearances, concerts etc was too good to miss. When

I joined back in 1992 the first thing I received through the post was my membership pack, which included a membership card, badge, a booklet all about the Fan Club plus a fact file all about Michael – and best of all, a signed photo of Mr Ball himself. In the booklet there was the first ever letter from Michael welcoming everyone to the Fan Club and thanking people for joining.

Soon after joining, I received the first ever copy of *On The Ball*. I still remember how happy I was when it dropped through the letterbox. I have to say, I still get the same buzz when I get my copy now, 28 years later!

Over the years I have had several things printed in OTB. The first was back in issue 10, when I had asked if anyone had recorded Michael's appearance at VE day celebrations as my video player (that shows how long ago it was!) hadn't recorded and I'd wanted to re-live being there on the day. Unfortunately, I wasn't successful getting this but I was pleased to have been in OTB.





love of Michael. I have made some amazing friends through the Fan Club, particularly the last couple of years and these friends are very special to me, they are like family. We've had some memorable times which I will treasure forever (2019 was an exceptional year for me). Over the past 31 years of being a fan, I have many highlights including: -

- Michael reading out my wedding anniversary dedication on his Radio 2 show last year.
- My question for Michael being printed in the 'If Everyone Was Listening' tour programme
- My first time of meeting Michael at London Palladium stage door before *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (it took me ages to calm down after that!)
- Attending Proms in The

Park concerts at Hyde Park seeing him present the show and perform there.

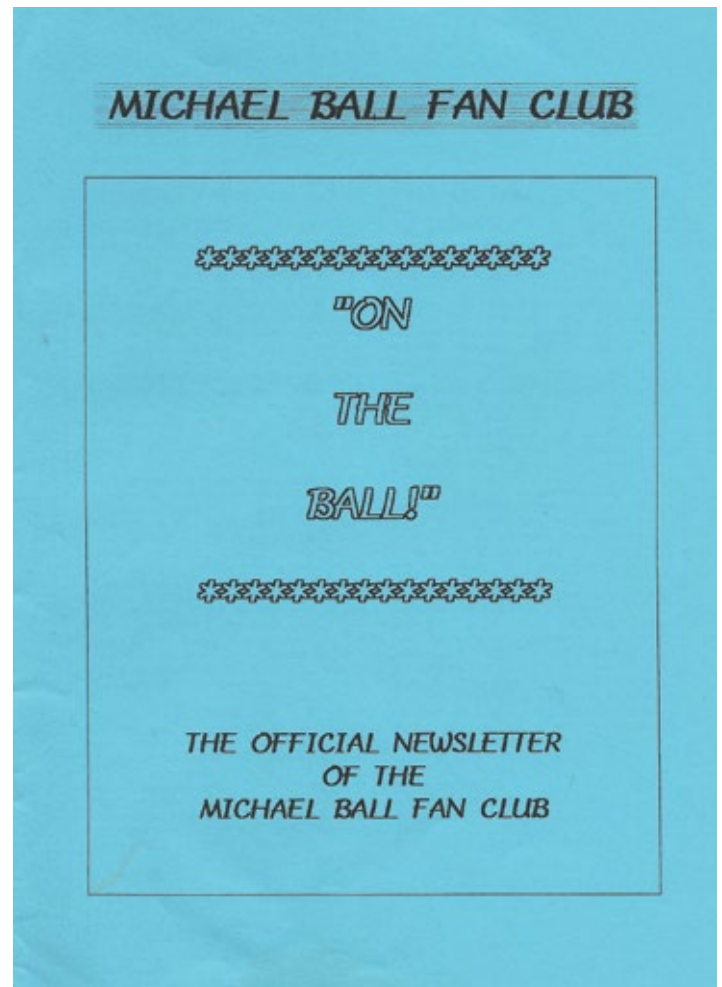
- Attending the Michael Ball show, live from Savoy Theatre for Radio 2.

My funniest moment was Graham Norton trying to pronounce my surname when interviewing Michael and Alfie (I had sent in a question for

him to ask the boys). I could go on but, there are too many highlights to mention!

Lastly, without whom the last 28 years wouldn't have been possible, I would personally like to say an immense thank you to Maureen and Gill – and more recently James, for your continued hard work to run the Fan Club, keeping everyone up to date with the latest news and goings on and for producing such amazing issues of *On The Ball* every year for us to enjoy. Also a very big thank you to everyone I have met over the years or chatted to via social media. It's been an amazing journey the past 28 years. Here's to many more.

Let's continue to HAVE A BALL!!!



# TAKING THE SHIRT OFF MICHAEL'S BACK!

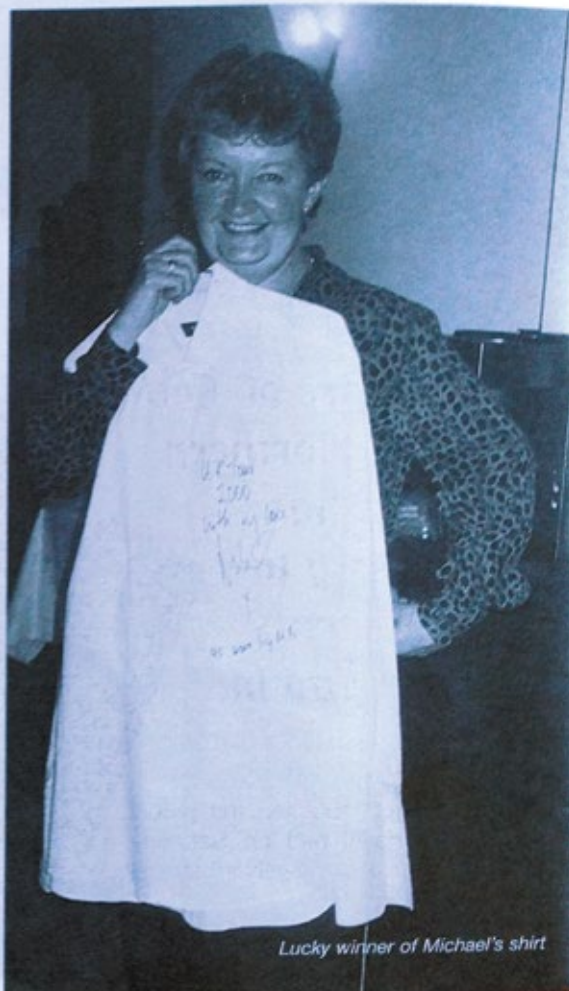
A lot of fans admire Michael's wardrobe, but how many people can say they own a part of it? Not many, but there are a couple of notable examples, with this one below and one to appear in Part 2, next issue. Patricia Gorman was the lucky recipient of some of Michael's attire and she takes up the story below:

I have been a member of the MBFC for about 23 years (oh my!) and I saw the message from James on Facebook asking for Fan stories or memories to include in *On The Ball*. My memory dates back twenty years, it was the year 2000, it had been a fantastic tour as usual, Blackpool was the last night. The show at the Opera House was the best, then came the after show party, everyone enjoyed the buffet and entertainment, hosted by Michael's Dad, Tony. I would love to know if anyone remembers me winning Michael's shirt, it was a simple competition and I couldn't believe when I found I was the winner! My photo was included in the *On The Ball Issue 26*, it was the smaller version but in colour. After such a great night, that was the icing on the cake, it still takes pride of place in my wardrobe! It would be nice if anyone remembers. You can find me on Facebook or reach me on email at: [patandalangorman@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:patandalangorman@hotmail.co.uk). Looking forward to hearing from you!

Patricia Gorman



Tony had brought along the prizes - a stack of tour posters, programmes and photos (the one from the CD/video cover) that he'd got Michael to sign. He also brought Michael's white shirt that he'd worn at the Royal Albert Hall (also signed) and Michael's old school cap with his name inside, so two very lucky people went home with those prizes! (I won a signed poster and one of my friends won a signed photo so we did quite well!)



# MANY MORE MICHAEL MEMORIES

I met Michael at the stage door in Chichester before watching *Mack & Mabel* in 2015. He was very friendly and I had this picture taken.

Angela Buckler



Both of these photos were taken outside the Queens Theatre in London during the run of *Passion*. The one of my daughter Lucy was taken on 21.07.96 and the one with Michael and myself on 18.09.96.

I have so many happy memories of those days. My friend Shelly and I travelled to London from the Midlands frequently to see Michael in *Passion* and we were lucky enough to meet him at the stage door many times. He was always very friendly and accommodating with all of us fans who were desperate to get photos and autographs !

It was also lovely to meet and get to know many of Michael's fans especially Jenny, (who sadly is no longer with us), Beryl and also Lisa and her mom Michelle.

Kathryn Blair



In 2001 I did a sponsored pub quiz. I managed to raise £1100. I raised it for Research into Ovarian Cancer, a charity very close to Michael's heart. Michael was in the show *Chitty, Chitty, Bang, Bang* at the time and Marks & Spencers was mentioned in the show. I told my local Marks & Spencers about it and they donated some vouchers. I later was told that a friend of mine, whom I had met through Michael, had won the vouchers!

I remember on that day Michael and Cathy were going out to a 21st birthday party after the show. The day after I told Michael that I thought that Cathy looked nice, as she had a trouser suit and a green and cream top on.

This photo was taken after I had presented Michael with a plastic cheque. I used to give Michael flowers every time that I went to see him after that. I got the nick name 'The Flower Lady'!

Kathryn Horner

# LOST AND FOUND

By Tessa Meese



I've been a Michael fan for many years. I was lucky enough on Saturday 27th April 2013 to go to The Birmingham Symphony Hall, to not only see Michael once more in concert but earlier in the evening, my partner, Adam, had treated me to a Meet & Greet package.

It was amazing and Michael was charm personified. When it was my time to be called up to chat and have my photo taken with him, my legs were like jelly. Michael called me "treasure" and said he loved my dress!! Swoon, swoon!

Sadly, just prior to meeting Michael and still to this day, I'm quite seriously poorly. So much so, I never downloaded the official photos of Michael & I that wonderful day.

Three years later, sometime in 2016, I contacted Live Nation, whom organise

these events, to ask if they had still had any of my photos at all. It was a long shot and I didn't think they would reply.

During my time in isolation, due to my ill health, I've been listening to Michael to get through the days, plus avidly watching Michael's interactions with Captain Tom. I also made sure I downloaded 'You'll Never Walk Alone!'

On 22nd April 2020, I decided to forward the email I sent to Live Nation all that time ago, praying they could help me. On 23rd April, Live Nation replied showing they had, in fact, responded previously and I'd missed it! They said they would try and help me, so could I send a couple of photos of me so they could try and pair us up; but not to build up my hopes as they don't keep all the photos.

On 24th April, Live Nation replied with the two photos I'd had taken with Michael! Yes... they'd found me! I only wish the brilliant staff at Live Nation had signed off with a name, as I'd love to thank them personally. They've made a very poorly lady's wish come true!

I'm waiting for a new home currently but whilst I'm living with my Mum, I've got my other photo of Michael & I when I met him at the stage door at Chichester when it previewed *Sweeney Todd*. It has a prime spot on my bedroom shelf.

The "official" photo I'm having made into a photo-tile so it won't fade or bend and it will take pride of place on my mantelpiece.

I'm so grateful to Live Nation. Wishes do come true if you wish hard enough...

## WIGGING OUT AT MEETING MICHAEL

By Lisa Harris



I completed a make-up artist diploma in 2009 and a fashion and photographic certificate 2010. I had always loved the theatre. I had been allowed to watch behind the scenes of a panto while I was still studying at college and had been allowed to shadow someone on the costume department at a different show at the same theatre. I had also been on a film set when my son was in a movie, so I knew the buzz of being on a film set too. I couldn't decide which I preferred because they were both exciting.

I'd had a crush on Michael Ball since I was around 17-18 years, when I first saw him sing 'Love Changes Everything', from *Aspects Of Love*. What dreamy eyes and cute dimples Michael had! I must have seen him on *Top Of The Pops*. My sister bought the single for my mom. I played it over and over again.

In 2010 I heard *Hairspray* was coming to the Bristol Hippodrome. I had also heard Michael Ball was going to be in it but from what I understood, there was someone else doing part of the tour as Edna Turnblad, so I waited for more news. I had never seen Michael Ball live because none of my family members would go with me. Then I married and had three children, so it just never happened.

Well, I waited for it to be confirmed that Michael was going to be playing Edna Turnblad at the theatre and I decided I would ask if there was any opportunity of work experience. Now it's true, I didn't strictly need it because I had seen how it all works backstage twice before but this was Michael Ball, so it was all the reason I needed! After a lot of emails and phone calls,

I finally found the right person to talk to. I was told "I'm sorry, we don't have a make-up department... but we do have a wigs department if you have any interest in wigs?"

To be honest, I'd have had an interest in cleaning if it got me backstage! The truth was, I had done some wig work for my course but I didn't have that much of an interest. However, I wrote back saying I was keen to learn. The person who was head of wigs, told me they had three days available 26-28th April 2011. I quickly accepted and was over the moon, I screamed out and was so excited!

Time flew by and on 25th April 2011, I was so nervous, I told my husband I was going to cancel, I couldn't do it. I had an upset stomach because I was so nervous. My husband told me "You are not cancelling, I'm not going to let you – you would always regret it and say what if!"

The next day I arrived at the theatre a nervous wreck. I literally thought I was going to be sick! I went through the stage door and was signed in. I was taken upstairs and into a room where someone was dressing the wigs. I met someone called David, he was head of the department and the one who arranged everything. I thanked him and told him how grateful I was. I also met Suzanne who worked on wigs and Andrew, Michael's personal assistant. When I'm nervous I talk and I was so nervous! I ended up telling Suzanne how I was so excited because I'd had a crush on Michael since I was 18 and how I'd told my husband "Even if I don't get to meet him I could touch one of his wigs!" She laughed at me and I could tell she thought I was a bit mad.

She then showed me the different wigs. I'd never seen anything like it, It was amazing. I sat and watched David dress wigs, he told me how some tall or wide ones have wire cages as support and about the different techniques, I really learnt a lot.

David then said we had to go downstairs and get ready for the performance. There was a wigs department corner and I was asked to sit on a chair out of the way but where I could watch. I met the cast and crew and watched the application of wigs, how hair was put in pin curls, how toupe's were fitted and men's hair was styled. Then suddenly, I was asked to quickly move to another chair because Michael sits where I was sitting to touch up his make-up! I moved but in my head was "Michael's going to be sat there, hang on, I'm sat in his chair, he's sat here before! If he's sitting there I'm going to see Michael, I'm going to see Michael, I'm going to see him!" I was so excited, my heart was racing, I had serious palpitations!

Suddenly, people were rushing everywhere, Michael came backstage and started touching up his make up, I watched him intently, in other words, I couldn't take my eyes off him. Once he had finished, he turned his chair round facing us. He looked at me smiled and waved. I half smiled back unsure if he was smiling at me but as I looked around, no one was behind me.

Then Andrew came up and asked "Lisa, have you met Michael?" I was about to say no when Michael came up. He took my hand, kissed me on both cheeks and said "Hello my lovely, I don't usually look like this! Got to go!" as he went off on to the stage. Oh I thought my heart would explode! My heart was pounding, I really thought I'd die! I vowed never to wash my face again! Later I was asked to pass a pair of shoes that were Michael's too, another thing to always remember and be pleased about!

Over the next two days, every time I saw Michael he would wave and smile. I saw Michael in his fat suit as they were changing his dress, I saw him trip as he tried to change his shoes and curse as he did it. I saw him chatting to another crew member about something that had annoyed him and I realised, he is just like any one of us, he is normal!

On 28th April 2011, I was sat discussing wigs with David, how they are made, who the best wig makers are and learning about



the “Bible” they have to show them how to style these wigs. You had to use what looked like ribbon, called a galloon, over the lace to put the front of the wig on before pinning it to the block to avoid tearing the lace. David also told me if I wanted to work in wigs and in theatre, I needed to complete a hairdressing qualification because they are getting stricter with qualifications and experience.

Suddenly Suzanne came into the room. Suzanne said “Michael asked if you’d like to come and have a photo with him in his dressing room?” I don’t remember exactly what I said but Suzanne replied “come on then and bring your phone”. I’m a large person and had always hated people putting their arm around me because they could then feel how fat I am! I was led into the room where Michael was leaning against the wall, he looked up and smiled at me. Oh what a gorgeous smile! He then read out my business name on my t-shirt, “Magnificent Make-Up”. I apologised saying “I’m sorry, I was told to wear black and it was the only black shirt I have!” He laughed.

He stood with his arm out stretched so I moved into position, he had his arm around my waist but then moved it to around my shoulder. His head was so close, as he moved, his head somehow pulled my hair. Once the photo was taken, he said, “I hope you are being looked after, if there is anything you need just let them know.” I nervously went to pieces, I remember saying “I’ve liked you since I was 18, I’m 38 now, bit of a crush I think!” He just laughed at me, I’m sure he’s heard it all before!

As I left I was almost in tears, I was so happy but I also realised that it was the first time in 20 years that someone had put his arm around me and I wasn’t stood there thinking “Oh no, he can feel how fat I am.” Suzanne led me back to the wigs room, she could see I



was emotional. She asked “Does it really mean that much to you?” I told her, yes, it meant the world to me, I can’t believe it! In truth, words couldn’t express how I felt. Michael had just been so lovely, he was a real gent.

On my way home that evening I was listening to an album of his and couldn’t stop crying but it was very mixed emotions, I would be smiling one minute because I was so happy at the experience but sad the next minute that it was all over. It was definitely an experience I was never going to forget.

Before that work experience, I had little interest in wigs but I learnt so much that it gave me a passion. So much so, I later did Level 2 Ladies Hairdressing, followed by Level 2 Barbering and Level 3 Creative Hair

Design. I hope at some point to do Level 3 Women’s Hairdressing too. I currently work in TV, Film and on photo shoots but I still have a huge love for the theatre. I would love more than anything to go on tour with a show.

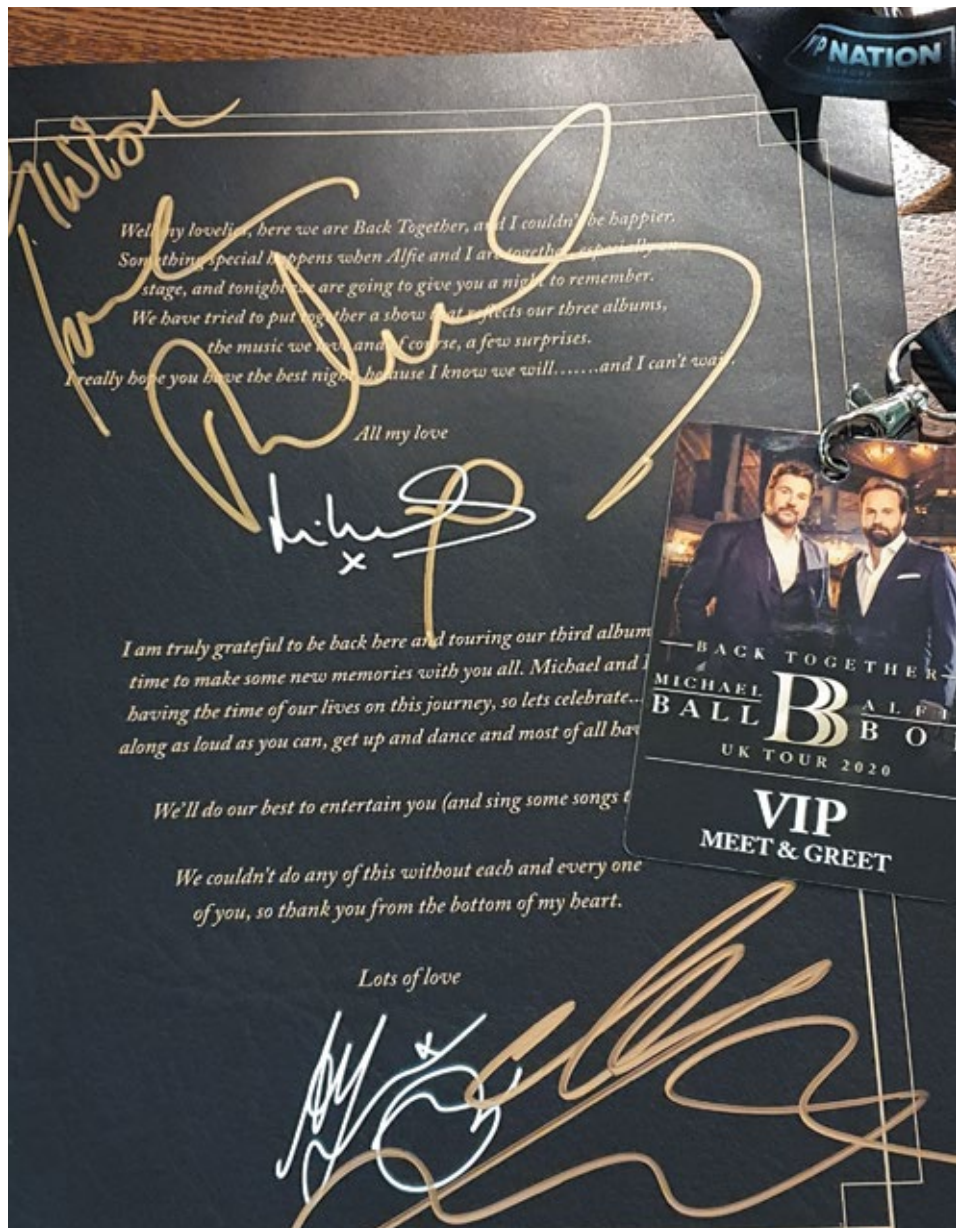
I later found out that what I’d said to Suzanne about how much I’d always liked Michael and how I’d waited for him to be confirmed before asking for work experience had gotten back to him, as Suzanne had told him when she fitted all his wigs.

It’s funny too, I have always struggled with a weight problem. Over the three days I spent with *Hairspray* I lost 12lbs in a week! I now believe if I was ever to go on tour with Michael, it would be the end of my weight problem, I’d soon be slim!



# Ball And Boe... And Gwion and Caio!

By Sara Lloyd-Burt



I went with my friend Jackie to see Michael & Alfie at Cardiff. My little boy Gwion, who is only six years old, is a big fan of Michael and he wanted to go to the concert. It was a school night and I didn't get home till gone midnight, so I promised to take him next time.

I was lucky enough to do a meet & greet and asked Michael if he would write the programme to my son Gwion. Of course he did, but had a giggle as he asked me to spell his name, as it was a Welsh name!

My son was over the moon the following morning that Michael had written "To Gwion, Love Michael" on the programme. He was so excited that we had to change his costume for school that morning for World Book Day, as he wanted to go as the one and only Michael Ball! Yes, he went to school dressed up as Michael and took the programme with him to show everyone. The brief for this year's World Book Day was to dress up as a Welsh HERO and who better to dress up as was Michael Ball, who has roots all the way to Mountain Ash?

I was going to dress my other son Caio up as Alfie Boe but he isn't Welsh, so he went as Jonathan Davies!





## WE ALL NEED A LITTLE MICHAEL MEDICINE! by Deb Jacobi



In 1995 I experienced my first brain tumor. My doctor told me that I had a 50% chance of still being alive in five years. In 2004 I turned 50 years old and I needed to do some major celebrating, because I made it well past the five years. My reward to myself – go to see Michael!

I couldn't think of a grander way to celebrate than to fly to London and see my favorite singer/actor in 'Singular Sensations'. My mother was definitely worried about me being alone due to my circumstances but I was never really alone due to his wonderful fans!

Another huge fan who lives Stateside, Jackie Evans, contacted Hope Lindemann in Texas to be my surrogate mother while I was at the show. She made me switch seats to sit by her and what a lovely lady she was. From the moment Michael came on stage to the end was marvelous and a dream come true. I can still hear his heels clicking as he entered! The man was fantastic and I couldn't have made a better choice!

Little did I know, but because of a generous fan, I would get to see him many more times live. My memories of all my trips, Michael and his wonderful fans are sweet thoughts to fall back on. I certainly feel blessed. Three brain tumors later, I'm still enjoying his career. I even request his music when I'm inside the MRI machine! We all can do with a little Michael medicine!



One of the few upsides to the lockdown and upheaval to everyday life is the chance to see Michael on TV a bit more regularly. As well as appearing on the aforementioned 'Captain Tom: We Salute You', Michael has also been co-presenting BBC's 'The One Show' recently,

alongside Alex Jones, reporting on heartwarming stories around the UK and chatting to a variety of famous names like Gary Lineker and Dame Darcey Bussell.



## RAFFLE WINNER



Margaret Wards was the lucky winner of the Fan Club raffle, winning a framed Gold disc Michael received in recognition of 100,000 'Centre Stage' album sales, plus various Fan Club memorabilia.

"I'm so thrilled with the package," Margaret said. "It's amazing to see the early issues of 'On The Ball'. I wish I had joined earlier! The Gold Disc will be put on the wall in my office to be admired by my friends and relatives."

## REMEMBERING ELIZABETH MASCARENHAS



We are very sorry to let you know that our dear friend Liz sadly passed away on 5th June after enduring a very brave fight. We all met through Michael and the fabulous Fan Club and wonderful friendships were made. We shared some great trips to concerts and other events around the country. We, and all her other MB friends, will miss her so much, but we have such happy memories to cherish forever. Our thoughts and condolences to her dear husband, our friend Bill. RIP Liz. From Lynn Baker, Janice Lazarus and Margaret Samson.

### PENPALS

The fans below would love to hear from anyone with a love of Michael:

PAT ALEXANDER

email: alexanderpatricia20@yahoo.com

6 Whitmarsh Court,  
Cromwell Road, Whitstable, Kent  
CT5 1NP

LINDA STROUDE

email: lindastroude4@gmail.com

97 Five Acers  
London Colney, St Albans  
Herts AL2 1HY

### THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

[www.mbfanclub.co.uk](http://www.mbfanclub.co.uk)

The Michael Ball Fan Club is now completely free to join – simply visit the website address above and register your email address and you will receive notifications every time there is some Michael Ball news to report. There is also a members area where you can download past issues of On The Ball and access Michael's past Infoline messages.

The password to access it is: **MBFC28**

